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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 001097

SIPDIS

OPS CENTER PLEASE PASS TO EVIAN  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER  
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY  
NAIROBI FOR T. PLAUMER  
BANGKOK FOR WIN DAYTON  
DS/OP/AF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2008

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI DETAINED AS WEEK OF MDC PLANNED MASS

ACTION BEGINS

REF: HARARE 1081

Classified By: Political Officer Peggy Blackford for reasons 1.5 b/d

**¶1.** (C) Summary. MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai was arrested this morning as his party prepared to kick off a week of mass action including demonstrations and stayaways against the government of Robert Mugabe. Though charges have not yet been brought against Tsvangirai, it may be that the government plans to accuse him of violating a court order handed down Saturday declaring the mass action illegal. Over the weekend the Government of Zimbabwe set up road blocks within Harare to limit the movement of large groups of people. Today Harare is virtually closed for business with most people being unable to obtain transport even if they do wish to go to work. It is unclear, however, whether the MDC will have equal success in organizing demonstrations. End Summary.

**¶2.** (C) Welshman Ncube, MDC spokesman, told the BBC in an interview this morning that Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the opposition MDC party, has been detained by the GOZ. This information was confirmed by several additional MDC sources who said that Tsvangirai had been picked up about 8:20 and is being held at Harare Central by the Law and Order section of the police. No charges have yet been made. Tsvangirai was also due in court this morning at 10 to face the treason charges previously brought against him. Other MDC leaders say that they are expecting to be arrested as well. Several MDC officials say that their homes were attacked on Sunday evening.

**¶3.** (C) Over the weekend the GOZ obtained a ruling from the High Court declaring this week's announced mass action (reftel) illegal. Gandi Mudzingwa, Tsvangirai's special advisor, told PolOff that the MDC did not recognize this ruling as valid and planned to go ahead with its activities. There were reports of a handful of arrests and some incidents of violence over the weekend in the high density areas but no major clashes. GOZ police and military were out in large numbers beginning on Saturday morning. Roadblocks were established on all roads leading into town though most private cars were waved through.

**¶4.** (SBU) As of Monday morning there was little traffic on the roads and virtually no transport available from the high density areas. The Embassy is open for business but between half and a third of the Embassy's locally hired employees failed to show up for work. Factory owners in the light industrial area report that almost all their employees are absent. PolOffs driving around the city report that center city has a fair number of people on the street and there is speculation that they may be planning to gather in protest at a later time. Many police, in groups of 4 or 5 are also on the street. Nearly all shops are closed. Several EmbOffs on their way to work noticed a several hundred people gathered near the University of Zimbabwe. Since then they were apparently dispersed by police using tear gas. The ground remains littered with rocks and tree branches and police are heavily deployed. Scattered reports are coming in from FSNs and others of groups gathering in the high density areas particularly the suburb of Kuwadzana.

SULLIVAN